

# BEYOND BARRIERS

VOLUME 6 ISSUE 1

SIKESTON REGIONAL CENTER

SPRING 2005

## Horseback Riding is Therapeutic for Riders with Disabilities, and for Volunteers

A person who can't use their legs *can* walk, when their legs straddle a horse. They experience life from a much taller vantage while in the saddle. The simple act of riding promotes exercise and strength. A horse's rhythm mimics our own, and its body heat helps to "limber-up" muscles and joints. Those who have difficulty communicating with others have no trouble bonding with a gentle horse.

It's the greatest wish of everyone involved with Mississippi Valley Therapeutic Horsemanship (MVTH) to give those with disabilities the chance to discover how horse-assisted therapy can impact their lives.

Since their founding in 2000, MVTH has provided equine-assisted therapy to children and adults living with disabilities throughout Southeast Missouri. Riders' families faithfully travel from up to 50 miles away for sensory-stimulating therapy they cannot find anywhere else between St. Louis and Memphis.

The non-profit program started with one young rider and two dedicated volunteers. Despite the challenge of borrowed facilities, it's grown to serve dozens of riders, including adults, and a couple dozen volunteers. MVTH struggles to meet the increasing demand for services.

A Kiwanis Club donation made it possible to put a down-payment on land in January of 2004. Now they're working to develop the property in North Cape County, so they can offer additional classes all year long.

MVTH doesn't turn riders away if they're unable to pay, thanks to a scholarship fund operated by the Cape Evening Optimists. Classes are \$25 each, but if that's a hardship, the rider is responsible for only \$5. The rest can be arranged through the scholarship fund.

For more information on equine-assisted therapy, check out the North American Riding for the Handicapped website at [www.narha.org](http://www.narha.org). Or to find out more about MVTH, please call 573-275-3040... or email the board president, Amy Jacquin, at [ajacquin@kfvs12.com](mailto:ajacquin@kfvs12.com).

### How Classes Work

Riders mount horses from either a sturdy mounting ramp or a mounting block, depending on their capabilities. The ramp can accommodate motorized wheelchairs, and has a hydraulic lift to securely transfer adults from their chairs to the horse's back.

Once mounted, the rider has someone leading their horse and two more people walking on either side of them. The side-walkers help support the rider's body and balance through safety belts. Or, if a rider is high-functioning, the side-walkers may just be there for emergency dismounting. Occasionally a trained volunteer may ride the horse behind the student, to provide more support.

Classes last 45 minutes and include stretches, balance exercises, and age-appropriate games or activities.

MVTH uses only instructors certified through NARHA. They follow all NARHA recommendations, and consider safety their top priority. They may use special therapeutic saddles, in addition to safety

stirrups and loop reins. To date, the program has not had a horse accident or injury.

The instructors are trained to develop sessions geared toward every rider's individual needs. They willingly consult with the rider's other health care professionals and therapists. Every rider must first complete an application, including a physician's statement.

Horses are carefully selected for the program. They're socialized and exposed to all sorts of stimuli, noises, and situations before ever being initiated into the program.



### Rider's Success Stories

Jackie was born 11 weeks early and weighed just 2.9 pounds. That caused some physical challenges. Then, when she was two years old, she was diagnosed with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia.

She became the very first rider for MVTH in the fall of 2000. During the first therapeutic riding class, Jackie was unable to sit up on the horse. By the end of the session, the riding stimulated her abdominal muscles and she was able to sit up on her own.

She suffered the daily side effects of chemotherapy for 2.5 years. Riding the warm horse gave Jackie sensory input, which made her feel noticeably better. Orthopaedically, riding improved her trunk strength and stretched her abductor muscles to help her with balance and walking.

The multisensory experience of riding also stimulated her speech and expressive language. Jackie continues to be one of the programs most faithful riders.

Becky Nation has been riding with MVTH for close to five years. Becky has cerebral palsy, which especially affects her right hand. Her mom, Margie, says the program inspires her daughter to work harder at other therapies.

"In class, they have her make right turns on the horses," Margie explains. "We always tried to get her to do hand exercises, but she just lost interest. - until she started riding. Now she works hard at her exercises so she can make better right turns on the horse!"

Margie also likes the independence it provides. She says Becky has lots to talk about after class.

"She's away from me for that hour," says Margie. "When she's on the horse, she has other people to talk to. She has to answer their questions since there's no one else around to talk for her. And after class, she can tell me all about it."

Becky also likes to know the names of the horses, and has her favorites. Plus, Margie notices an increase in Becky's leg muscles. That may be very important since Becky is trying to do without braces. Now she wants to ride even more, to work on her legs!

"Plus, it's a fun form of therapy," says Margie. "It's work, but she doesn't realize she's working."

- - Continued on Page 2

(Cont. from Page 1) The Importance of Volunteers

MVTH relies on volunteers. It takes a minimum of three volunteers for every rider. People do not need horse experience to help with classes. But if working close to large animals does not sound exciting, the program also needs volunteers for desktop publishing, website maintenance, fundraising events, community exposure events, and property maintenance.

Jessie and Christy Stewart started volunteering almost four years ago. Jessie was just 12, and Christy in her mid-20's.

"I enjoy helping the kids and all the people that ride," Jessie says. "Once I started, I couldn't stop. I find it to be fun."

"I enjoy it," adds Christy. "I think it's therapeutic for the children. It's also therapeutic for me. I love to go and see the smiles on the kids' faces. I like knowing I'm helping somebody in a way that's different from most others."

The brother and sister started as side-walkers, and continue in that capacity today, but last year they accepted the position of Equine Manager. That means they have to feed the horses every day, check to make sure there are no problems, move the horses as needed, help prepare the horses for riding sessions, and haul hay and feed. Their family even agreed to store all the equipment, until the program can build a storage unit.

Jessie is almost 16 and busy with school. Christy is almost 30 and is a single-parent. Yet they devote a minimum of 7 hours a week to the program... and frequently that number jumps to closer to 20! Their family and friends are well aware of their involvement.

"Most friends ask why I don't want to hang out more," says Jessie. "But most think it's a good thing. And every once in a while, one of them helps out."

"I don't volunteer for the program," adds Christy. "I belong to it. They can see it's my heart and soul. I want it to grow and become larger as much as it can. I'm proud of it."

Linda and Eddie Farrow are retired... but they work harder than most full-time employees!

"We do it for the kids," Linda says simply. "We enjoy helping others, and we know the program is very beneficial. We see them come in and they're stiff. But they leave more relaxed. And this is something they can do, that other children often can't!"

Linda serves on the MVTH Board of Directors, and practically adopted everyone associated with the program. She provides food and drinks, does a lot of computer work for the program, and actively works on fundraising. Eddie is the Facilities Manager and bush-hogs the property, builds fences, hauls materials and supplies in his truck, hauls horses whenever needed, and also volunteers as a side-walker for class.

After the program first bought its property, the Farrows even parked their travel trailer on the property because they were putting in such long days! They both admit 60-hour "work" weeks were the norm.

-- Amy Jacquin, Anchor/Reporter, KFVS 12  
Email: [ajacquin@kfvs12.com](mailto:ajacquin@kfvs12.com)  
Phone: 573-335-1212 Ext. 128

## Concerning Self-Esteem...

A child needs to feel good about himself in order to accept the failures that will naturally occur in life. An important aspect of self-esteem is succeeding in an activity. The parents' job is to help their child find this success. One of the hardest things for a parent to do is allowing their child to fail. Parents see their child struggle with an activity, and their automatic response is to help. It takes restraint on the parent's part to do what is best for the child. The parent needs to be patient, and allow the child to try until he/she is successful. If parents notice that their child suffers from low self-esteem, they may need to seek professional guidance.

Tender Hearts Child Therapy Center provides individual, family, and group counseling for children and families. We also provide parent training and marriage counseling. Our staff specializes in play therapy where children can begin to understand their world, express themselves, and use play therapy to solve their problems in a safe environment. Children may need therapy when physical, emotional, or verbal abuse has occurred; they have low self esteem; parents are divorced; they are underachievers; they have trouble making friends; or are violent to themselves or others.

-- Deborah Hohimer,  
Tender Hearts Child Therapy Center  
3191 Old Cape Road  
Jackson, MO 63755

*Here's an idea!  
Send a heartfelt thank-you  
to a volunteer you know.  
Do it today.  
That's all the inspiration most  
volunteers need to continue  
their important work.*



## Who's A.N.D.Y.

Our principal announced we would be having an assembly titled, "A.N.D.Y." My initial response to her announcement was, "Who's Andy?" Although you would think teachers may be excited about having assemblies during school, this particular day I was not excited. I had a great deal of work to catch up on with some of my students. As the assembly time arrived, I walked with my special needs students down to the cafeteria to find out what "A.N.D.Y." was all about. I had briefly heard that it had something to do with puppets and students with disabilities, so I became a bit intrigued. To my great surprise, the assembly

was a complete hit! The puppet team presented skits of students with a variety of disabilities, ranging from cerebral palsy, a student in a wheelchair, to a student with autism. Each skit described a student with a disability similar to several children we have in our school. They not only described the disability as it presents itself, but they also discussed issues related to each disability. The discussion and questions that the puppets presented were actual questions that our students had previously asked us. Some of them were tough questions. The puppets and the other staff members answered each question with honesty and respect for the student with the disability. I believe the show definitely impacted how our children now interact with our students with disabilities. Our children have a better understanding of our students with disabilities, and they appear to be more at ease in their interactions with them. It amazed me how the logo, "Able Not Disabled Youth", stuck with our students. They came to the realization that individuals should not be looked at for what they cannot do, but for what they can do. Thank you "A.N.D.Y." puppeteers and staff for providing a fantastic and timely program for our school!

--Mandy Deimund, Special Education Teacher, Alma Schrader Elementary, Cape Girardeau, MO

# Regional Round-Up



**SOS Mentor Training** Tuesday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 9 a.m. to Noon at Christ Church of the Heartland, 720 Bertling, Cape Girardeau. Cindy Brotherton will be the presenter. Sharing Our Strengths (SOS) is a Missouri-wide peer support network, matching parents who are raising children with disabilities to other parents. Mentors share experiences, practical information and resources and offer emotional support. The only special skills are a willingness to listen and share, and the time to make a few phone calls or send a few emails. Professionals and individuals with disabilities are also needed as mentors. Call 573-243-0520 to register or learn more.

**Auditory-Verbal Workshop:** Parents of children who are deaf/hard of hearing, and professionals who work with them, will have the opportunity to attend a workshop May 9-11 at the Drury Lodge in Cape Girardeau. Cost for parents is \$25. Ellen A. Rhoades will be the presenter (visit her website to learn more about her and the AV approach: [www.auditoryverbaltraining.com](http://www.auditoryverbaltraining.com).) For more information, questions, or to register, contact Brandy Bridges at (573) 651-4607.

**NEW!! Online calendar of Family events** for Cape Girardeau County and neighboring Scott City, sponsored by Community Caring Council and United Way: Check it out at [www.communitycaringcouncil.org/fac2](http://www.communitycaringcouncil.org/fac2)

**S.T.A.R.** (Special Therapeutic Activities in Recreation) is a therapeutic recreation program located in Cape Girardeau, and serving individuals who are unable to successfully participate in regular recreation programs. Most individuals with special needs may participate. Monthly activities are planned, and pre-registration is necessary. Call Sharon or Katie at (573) 334-2859 for more information or to register.

**May 17, 6-8 p.m. – May Festival with games and cookout, Arena Park #1**

**June 16, 6-8 p.m. – Hawaiian Luau, Capaha Park**

## State Regulations for Special Education

### Notice of Public Hearing

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) will hold public hearings regarding the State Regulations for Special Education as required for Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The purpose of the hearing is to receive comments from persons interested in special education services for children 5K to 21. The Public Hearing scheduled for this area of Missouri will be May 17<sup>th</sup> from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. at the Cape Girardeau Board of Education Conference Room. It is located at 301 N. Clark (old Vo-Tech school). Use the North Entrance and go to the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor.

Individuals who require special accommodations to attend need to contact the Division of Special Education at DESE at least 72 hours prior to the event, (Telephone 573-526-7605 or RELAY in Missouri: 1-800-735-2966 TDD).

Following the public comment period, the State Regulations will be submitted to the Office of Special Education Programs of the U. S. Department of Education and the Missouri State Board of Education for final approval.

## Consumer's Guide to Funding

### Assistive Technology

[http://www.abledata.com/abledata\\_docs/funding.htm](http://www.abledata.com/abledata_docs/funding.htm)

With the advent of new technology, more and more options exist to enable persons with disabilities to live independently, to achieve higher levels of education, to participate in activities of the workplace, and to engage in hobbies and recreational activities. With the awareness of the existence of technology, persons with disabilities and their families expect access to that technology. However, attempting to fulfill those expectations often leads to frustration as individuals seek financial assistance to purchase needed devices. Consumers and families are often confronted with a seemingly impenetrable maze of eligibility requirements, potential funding sources, restrictions, paperwork, rules and regulations, and denials and refusals. This Informed Consumer Guide from Able Data provides sources of information to help negotiate that maze.

## Bootheel Buzz

People First Notes and News

Sikeston People First rang in 2005 with a full slate of new officers, including two historians to keep track of news articles and pictures at the many various events. Fundraising became a priority in February with a candy sale and 50-50 raffle. In addition, Sikeston People First would like to thank the Scott County Senate Bill 40 Board for approving our grant proposal. This will help members attend the statewide conference, Legislative Day at the Capital and other statewide events. February also brought a flurry of activity as self advocates made valentines for legislators asking them to keep them in their hearts and minds during this legislative session. A Valentine Party topped off the February meeting. Currently, members are busy preparing for Legislative Day and the statewide conference. They are also joining forces with the local Regional Advisory Council to sponsor a new Junior People First group for individuals from the ages of 12-17 that have disabilities. On a sad note, a longtime member of Sikeston People First died on February 23<sup>rd</sup>. Frank Brown will be greatly missed by all who were lucky enough to know him.

## Christopher Reeve Internship Work from Home!

Through a grant from the Christopher Reeve Paralysis Foundation, Lift, Inc. is hiring a part-time writer who has paralysis and is eager to promote the employment of men and women who have disabilities. To find out more about the job and how to apply, visit [www.lift-inc.org](http://www.lift-inc.org) and click on "featured openings."





# Web Watch

**Missouri Protection and Advocacy Website:** The following online manuals are now available at [www.moadvocacy.org](http://www.moadvocacy.org) by clicking on "Manuals:"

- Legal Rights Manual for Missourians with Disabilities
- Guardianship and Conservatorship in Missouri

You can also scroll down on the home page and click on "Special Education" to view an online presentation on "Understanding IEP's." This presentation is designed to teach visitors about IEP's, step by step.

**International Children's Digital Library** contains digital children's books in a variety of subject matter, age ranges, and languages. Free. All books are recommended by children ages 3-13, as well as librarians, teachers, parents and caregivers who work with children of these ages. [www.icdlbooks.org](http://www.icdlbooks.org).

**Guide for Medicaid Recipients:** The "Missouri Medicaid/MC+ Fee-for-Service Recipient Handbook" has been posted on the Medicaid website at [http://dss.mo.gov/dms/dated/hndbk\\_ffs.pdf](http://dss.mo.gov/dms/dated/hndbk_ffs.pdf) (Note underscore between the k and f.)

The **National Family Caregivers Association (NFCA)** offers lots of information, links and opportunities to communicate with other caregivers. Visit their new website at [www.thefamilycaregiver.org](http://www.thefamilycaregiver.org).

**Healthy Place** is a large consumer mental health site, providing comprehensive information on psychological disorders and psychiatric medications from both a consumer and expert point of view. [www.healthyplace.com](http://www.healthyplace.com).

**Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights (PACER)** is a national center offering assistance to individual families, workshops, materials for parents and professionals and leadership in securing a free and appropriate public education for children across the nation. [www.pacer.org](http://www.pacer.org)

**What is the Bridges4kids NewsDigest?** A free, weekly electronic newsletter full of information related to Parenting Concerns, Child Development, Special Education and Disabilities. This "ezine" is loaded with information and great stories. To sign up, visit <http://www.bridges4kids.org>

**The Fathom Archive**, provided by Columbia University, offers access to free learning resources, including seminars, lectures, and articles developed by its member institutions. For example: Learn how to write a screen play from the American Film Institute...Listen to a steam engine seminar from the Science Museum...Learn more about therapeutic cloning from the University of Chicago. <http://www.fathom.com>

At **Learn the Signs, Act Early**, you will find a developmental milestone chart for ages 3 mo. – 5 yrs., fact sheets on several disabilities, resources and interactive tools for parents: [www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/actearly](http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/actearly)

Just for fun, try out **All in Play**, where the playing field has been leveled with the creation of completely accessible online games. It is a place where people who are blind and people who are sighted can go head-to-head with no special rules, handicapping, or accommodations. It all started with three college friends, one of whom is blind. Try out a free trial game of Crazy Eights or Texas Hold 'Em. <http://allinplay.com>

## Community Connection

My friend, Jill, recently said to me, "Why do I DO this to myself?! You'd think my family and my job would be enough. But, NO! I volunteer at church, I'm at every school party, I'm a den mother for Boy Scouts...and NOW I agreed to help coach Amy's basketball team. Between school and all her therapy sessions, I don't even know how Amy will find the time...much less me!"

"You and Amy are awfully busy," I replied. "Maybe you could give yourself a break and let someone else volunteer!"

"I don't know. I feel like this could mean so much to Amy, socially and for her own self esteem, and I want to be right there to see it. This is the first time she's played a team sport with typical kids. I won't run interference for Amy, but I want to be a part of her experience so I understand the best ways to support her. And anyway, I'm good at basketball, and I have a talent for coaching. So, this is one way I can share the gifts He gave me."

Wow. There are so many reasons why people volunteer their time and talents, and so many excuses not to. It has everything to do with "attitude." Maya Angelou said, "I've learned that you shouldn't go through life with a catcher's mitt on both hands; you need to be able to throw something back." This issue of *Beyond Barriers* is dedicated to all the volunteers out there who share their time and talents to make a difference somewhere, somehow. Where would we be without them?

I saw Jill yesterday and asked her about her coaching. She said, "Well, I was telling myself daily that this was it. Never again. It's too painful when things don't go right for my daughter...and too hard not to step in and try to pave the way for her when I see her struggle. But the team came around. The kids figured things out and Amy made new friends. And then, it happened. Last game of the year. Amy stole the ball and drove it down the court and made her shot. It went in! I cried. The other coaches cried. The crowd just went wild! Yep. I'll be doing this again next year!"

- Candy Lane  
Community Resource Specialist

## Sensory Processing Materials and Resources

Chris Wilsey, a mom in our region, is offering her 25% discount on products from Sensory Resources. You can view their line of products on their website at [www.sensoryresources.com](http://www.sensoryresources.com). Do not order directly from the website to receive the discount. You will need to order through Chris. She also has a number of products that have been donated for her to loan out to parents. Call Chris Wilsey at 573-262-3948 for more information.

## I.E.P. QUIZ

See how knowledgeable you are with IEP law. Take an IEP quiz. If you don't do well, don't worry. At least you'll learn something new about IEP's. Click on the link below and follow the directions.

[www.wrightslaw.com/info/iep.ig.quiz.htm](http://www.wrightslaw.com/info/iep.ig.quiz.htm)

## Auditory Processing A Piece of the Puzzle?



**Auditory Integration Training (AIT)** has been around for several years now. It is an interesting story as to how it came to Missouri, and was originally provided by MRDD as a treatment for autism. In the mid nineties, the majority of research regarding AIT had focused on people with autism, and the results were positive.

It is important to understand that AIT is not a treatment for autism. It is a treatment for auditory perception disorders. AIT is therefore, often helpful in addressing the auditory processing component in ADD/ADHD, Aspergers, and other autism spectrum disorders, Fragile X Syndrome, Dyslexia, Learning Disabilities, and other developmental disabilities. There are currently twenty-nine published research studies supporting AIT's effectiveness in dealing with the way the brain processes auditory information.

As more people have become aware that auditory issues are at the core of the "ideal client" profile, less emphasis has been placed on diagnostic and educational labels for referral. We have increasingly seen good results with individuals who have poor attention to auditory stimuli and/or who have difficulty processing auditory information. These problems exist cross-categorically and are, in part, identified by the following behaviors.

- Tunes out
- Is overwhelmed in group situations
- Learns better "one to one"
- Learns better visually (has difficulty with phonics)
- Has a short attention span
- Needs physical prompts to follow verbal instruction
- Can't stay focused
- Responds to only part(s) of verbal instruction

- Has trouble remembering what he/she has been told
- Is easily distracted by background noise
- May show hypersensitivity to some sounds
- Shows a slow or delayed response time
- Has speech/language delays

Some other signs to look for (especially in the autism spectrum disorders) are related tactile-sensitivity behaviors such as dislike or avoidance of having hair brushed, getting hair cuts, washing face, brushing teeth.

Space does not permit examples of "success stories" but every AIT practitioner is full of them. There are countless examples, right here in Southeast Missouri, of children and adults alike who can now tolerate the noisy world around them, and/or make better sense of what they hear after experiencing AIT. Websites abound with such stories. Check out [www.georgianainstitute.org](http://www.georgianainstitute.org) to get you started.

Auditory Integration Training entails two thirty-minute listening sessions per day for ten days. If possible, an audiogram (hearing test) will be done prior to, at mid-point, and at the end of the training. Daily behavioral observations are recorded by parents or participants. Follow-up contact is important because often improvements continue for several months after the training.

AIT practitioners are available in Southeast Missouri. Judevine Center of St. Louis and Tilghman Clinic of Sikeston offer the service. Your Regional Center can tell you how to access both. [Aitinstitute.org](http://Aitinstitute.org) is a source for a nation-wide listing of providers. Please feel free to call this writer at (573)380-0654 for other information.

- - Lynn Feeler, MA, AIT Practitioner  
Former Regional Center Director



## The Special Education SCHOOL ZONE

Why volunteer your time and talents? What is it that drives many of us to volunteer for anything? Well, if you do volunteer your time, then you know the answer. For me it's that sense of knowing something is too important to not volunteer, and that I'm making a difference for the better in people's lives. I volunteer a lot of my time to MPACT, and if you log on to MPACT's website at [www.ptimpact.com](http://www.ptimpact.com) and click on "Volunteer" you can read why it is so important for MPACT to have volunteers.

If you are not already aware, MPACT is a statewide parent training and information center with the mission "To ensure that all children with special needs receive an education which allows them to achieve their personal goals." With a goal like that, why wouldn't you want to volunteer for MPACT?

So, to all the parents of special needs children, when a parent mentor is advocating for your child, that person is dedicating their own personal time to make a positive difference in your child's life. They are doing it for your

child's future...not for their own personal gain. In order to help your child's advocate help you, it is critical to dedicate time of your own to learn special education law. If you are interested and serious about committing yourself and your time to a great organization, call MPACT to find out more about becoming a parent mentor, or to learn about upcoming trainings in your area. Always remember that you are your child's voice...and you must speak with knowledge.

- - Bryan Noack, Father of Alexis,  
Service Coordinator

## Safety "Scents"



**If you have a child or other relative who is prone to wander off, you might want to use this proactive idea:**

Cut a brand new sponge in half and pin it to the inside of the child or elderly person's clothing, against their skin, for 24 hours straight. Then, remove it and seal it in a freezer bag with the person's name and date and place it in the freezer. Mark your calendar to repeat this process and replace the sponge once a year. If that child or other relative should wander off or get lost in woods, etc., a police dog can sniff the sponge and have a much greater scent of the missing person to go on than just a piece of clothing. Clothing also contains other scents from things such as detergent, fabric softener, smoke, or other distracting odors.



## NEWS YOU CAN USE

--Candy Lane, Community Resource Coordinator

**Bug Master** offers protection for people who are in wheelchairs and/or are unable to defend themselves against pesky flying insects. Bug Master products come in the form of wrist bands or adhesive strips and last up to 72-hours out of the package. They are even safe for babies. Cost is 5 packs for \$9.95. For more information, visit [www.bugmasterproducts.com](http://www.bugmasterproducts.com), write Bug Master Products, PO Box 3004, Hayward, CA 94540, or call 1-510-889-5922.

**IonKids** is a new technology system that enables parents and guardians to monitor and locate their children or dependents when they're at a park, theme park, mall, airport, or just in the backyard. The system has two components: a specially designed "wristag" (belt clip tags are also available) that is worn by the child, and a hand-held "base unit" that is used by the parent. Each base unit can simultaneously monitor up to four tags. Cost for a starter kit with one tag is around \$220. For more information, call 888-846-6543 or visit the IonKids website at [www.ion-kids.com](http://www.ion-kids.com).

**Personal Ponies** is a unique non-profit organization dedicated to providing children with special needs a tiny Shetland Pony to love and care for --completely without charge. The ponies are often as small as 30 inches, seldom more than 39 inches, and are the ideal pony to be personal companions of children with disabilities. Learn more about *Personal Ponies* by visiting [www.personalponies.org](http://www.personalponies.org).

**"Get Ready to Read!"** Sponsored by the National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD), this program was designed to build the early literacy skills of preschool children. The program includes a literacy screening tool and skill-building activities, both available free on the website, [www.getreadytoread.org](http://www.getreadytoread.org), and can be used by parents, early educators, child care providers and other adults to help preschool children acquire fundamental literacy skills.

**Grassroots.org** is a 501c3 non-profit organization that serves other nonprofit organizations worldwide. They provide free web hosting and email Internet services to charities. Grassroots also provides free legal consulting to charities, including assistance with incorporation, application for tax-exempt 501c3 status with the IRS, general employment, tax and risk management issues. The focus is on helping non-religious, non-legislative organizations and causes by providing free services to help them save money and become more efficient. For more information, or to apply for services, visit [www.grassroots.org](http://www.grassroots.org).

**EZ-ON Vest:** Adjustable vests that can be used as a safety restraint for older kids and adults in the family car. [www.ezonpro.com](http://www.ezonpro.com)

## News from the World of Autism



**National Autism Symposium**, May 18-21, 2005, Tan-Tar-A Resort, Lake of the Ozarks, Osage Beach, sponsored by the Missouri Department of Mental Health. More information and registration forms are available by clicking on "Spring Training Institute" at <http://modmhtest.dmh.state.mo.us/ada/provider/springtrain.htm>.

**Complimentary DVD's** containing all of NBC Universal's autism-related programming from Feb. 19<sup>th</sup> through Feb. 25<sup>th</sup> are available by visiting [www.autismspeaks.org](http://www.autismspeaks.org). Click on "Free Autism DVD Available." There is a \$4.95 shipping and handling fee.

**"Special Education: Children with Autism"** is a report of the Government Accountability Office (GAO) study on the costs of educating individuals who have some type of autism spectrum disorder. One interesting finding indicates that the number of children ages 6-21 diagnosed with autism, and requiring special education services, has increased by more than 500% in the last ten years. To read more, visit <http://www.house.gov/burton/pr021405.htm>

**"Your Next Patient Has Autism..."** is a trifold brochure developed for the many health professionals -- nurses, physicians, technicians and others -- who provide services for children on the autism spectrum. It is especially designed for those who only occasionally treat this population. Physical assessment, diagnostic imaging, and a variety of other interventions -- both invasive and non-invasive -- may induce fear and anxiety in people with autism. Their behavioral responses to such experiences often interfere with needed care and increase the risk of physical and/or psychological trauma. "Your Next Patient Has Autism..." provides caregivers with a synopsis of autism and specific recommendations for managing the special needs of these patients in the context of healthcare. <http://www.bridges4kids.org/Disabilities/YourNextPatient.pdf>

**Just For Kids! What is Autism?** <http://www.njcosac.org> (Click on "Autism Facts.") This document from the New Jersey Center for Outreach and Services for the Autism Community explains autism in a way that a child can easily understand - by comparing the child with autism to the child without autism - in a very positive way. Great handout for kids in classrooms, church school or scout troops!

**Autism Connect:** Keep up with the latest autism events, hot topics and research at [www.autismconnect.org](http://www.autismconnect.org).

**"Spectrum of Autism Disorders"** is a new booklet available free from LIFE (Leisure Is For Everyone.) Written with autism expert Julie Donnelly, PhD, it describes the range of Autism Spectrum disorders, as well as assessment, treatment, educational options, case studies and resources. Missourians may order a free copy by calling the LIFE Line at 1-800-392-7348.



Coming together is the beginning. Keeping together is progress.  
Working together is success.

# MAKE YOUR OWN DEVELOPMENTAL TOYS

**A Walk & Totter**—is a combination balancing beam and teeter-totter. To make one, take a 6-to-8 foot plank of wood that is 2 inches thick and eight to 12 inches wide. Cut a 2-by-4 the same width as the plank. Nail the cut 2x4 in the center of the board and flip it over. What you now have is a very low-to-the-ground teeter-totter that will tip as a child walks across, thus enabling the child to work on balance and coordination. You can also make a much shorter version for rocking and balancing by using a 2 ft. board instead of the 8 ft.

**Grab Bags for lessons.** If you have an easily distracted child, sometimes having a "reinforcer" will help him stay on task. I have used many tricks to get my son interested in the lessons we are to learn. One of the things that I've done is to save **old boxes** (Christmas boxes in a variety of shapes and colors, or fancy bags work especially well.) Put one of the items that you want to work with in each of the bags and let him choose one. Say he chooses a bag, and in that bag is a book or game. We work on that book or game first. The child knows it will be fun because it is a surprise!

**Masking Tape Magic:** Masking tape that is 2-to-4 inches wide can be taped to the floor to make a good **balancing beam**. It is easy to remove from both carpeting and flooring. Walking a straight line on this "imaginary balance beam" is also good for coordination and balance. It is also fun to use to make a mini maze or labyrinth. Small children can have fun trying to form their ABCs out of masking tape as well. If they succeed, they won't forget it!

**Two liter bottles** (empty) are great for "**bowling**."

**TP rolls:** Make a telescope, binoculars (2 together), a kaleidoscope (colored cellophane or tissue paper taped on the end), rolling pin, a whirligig (cut most of the long way diagonally and fold out), a megaphone, or a microphone.

**Old buttons** are great for **sorting and matching**, as are noodles and beans, socks, crayons and colored paper clips. Egg cartons are great for sorting things into.

**Old stockings** make great **sensory balls** for tossing. Just fill them with beans or rice and tie the ends.

**Large cardboard boxes** are always fun for playing in and making things. The outside can be decorated with windows and doors. In our family we have made **castles and spaceships, Noah's Arks, robots, tunnels** and many other things from cardboard boxes. --Chris Wilsey, Resourceful Mom

## Did You Know?

The SPD Network, with the support of the KID Foundation, has established local parent groups across the country called DSI-PC or Dysfunction of Sensory Integration's Parent Connections. These groups include parents of children with all types of disabilities who are encountering sensory processing challenges. The focus of the DSI-PC is to increase awareness of sensory integration dysfunction and provide parents with resources and support as they endeavor to meet their children's unique neuro-sensory needs. The Kid Foundation has made a commitment to send each host a packet every month containing resources to use at parents groups. The immediate goal is to create a separate web page for each parent group on the [www.SPDnetwork.org](http://www.SPDnetwork.org) website. If you are interested in hosting such a group, please contact Teri Heines, PsyD, LCSW, Education Coordinator, Teri@KIDfoundation.org, (303)478-9978. You can also visit the KID Foundation at [www.KidFoundation.org](http://www.KidFoundation.org).

### HOME SCHOOLING RESOURCES ONLINE

**Homeschool World:** "The World's Most Visited Home School Site" offers one-stop shopping for all your home school needs. [www.home-school.com](http://www.home-school.com)

#### Homeschooling Today® Magazine

This magazine for home school families offers many online articles and a "market square." [www.homeschooltoday.com](http://www.homeschooltoday.com)

**Heart of Wisdom** contains home school curriculum materials and resources written for homeschool. [www.heartofwisdom.com](http://www.heartofwisdom.com)

**VegSource:** Sell or swap your old curriculum, buy used material at reduced prices, or chat with other home schoolers. [www.vegsource.com/homeschool](http://www.vegsource.com/homeschool)

### IDEAS FOR PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

**Preschool Express** by Jean Warren: [www.preschoolexpress.com](http://www.preschoolexpress.com)

This site offers many wonderful ideas to make and do with preschool age children.

### BRAILLE ALPHABET BRACELETS

At First Sight offers lovely Braille Alphabet Bracelets. They consist of small tiles of individual letters done in Braille on one side and Roman type on the back. Cost is \$35.00. Order online at [www.nbp.org/ic/nbp/BRACE.html](http://www.nbp.org/ic/nbp/BRACE.html), or call toll free 800-548-7323.

*Obstacles don't have to stop you.  
If you run into a wall, don't turn around and give up.  
Figure out how to climb it, go through it, or work around it.*



## Finding the Assistive Device That's Right for You

**ETC** (Equipment Technology Consortium) is an assistive technology loan program in Missouri whereby families, supporting agencies and schools can borrow equipment to try out for up to six weeks **FREE**. Sikeston Regional Center is approved to borrow...or, an agency or organization can apply to be approved themselves (a school or group home, for example). Desired items (up to 3) are shipped at no cost to the borrower. Independent Living Centers (SADI, BAILS, LIFE) can assist with assessing equipment needs, and can also help order items from ETC. This is an excellent way for individuals to try out equipment to see if it would work for them...**before** going out and spending lots of money on an item, when something else might work better for that person! Let your service coordinator know if you'd like to try out some equipment. Check out further information and a catalog of items available at <http://etc.rockhurst.edu/>

## Vision Service Plan's Sight for Students Program



Vision Service Plan (VSP) will help more than 50,000 kids across the nation receive quality eye care this year through their Sight for Students program. Started in 1997, the program offers free eye exams and eyewear to low-income, uninsured children from kindergarten through high school. To help instruct children about their eyes and proper eye care, VSP has also created a classroom toolkit which informs teachers about the signs and symptoms of vision problems through fun, interactive activities. Here is how it works. Sight for Students gift certificates are delivered through a network of community partners who work directly with children. To find out more about VSP's Sight for Students Program, or to obtain assistance in finding a community partner, please call 1-888-290-4964 or visit online at [www.sightforstudents.org](http://www.sightforstudents.org).

### Deadline Looms for Disabilities Leadership Forum at UMC

May 6<sup>th</sup> is the deadline for students with disabilities to apply for the exciting four-day Missouri Youth Leadership Forum (MYLF), July 24-27, on the University of Missouri-Columbia campus. By serving as delegates from their communities, young people with disabilities will cultivate leadership, citizenship, and social skills. The event is provided at no cost to the student delegates. Co-sponsors are the Governor's council on Disability, Missouri Planning Council and the Independent Living Resource Center, Inc.

Delegates are selected through a statewide competition. Missouri high school students with disabilities who are juniors or seniors this year and show leadership potential are encouraged to apply. Applicants will submit a standard form, essay, and three names for references. More information and applications are available by contacting the Governor's Council on Disability (1-800-877-8249) or by visiting the website at [www.gcd.ia.mo.gov](http://www.gcd.ia.mo.gov).

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Visit Sikeston Regional Center's Website at: <http://www.dmh.missouri.gov/sikeston>

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**Information on alternative treatments, resources, and products is provided in this newsletter as a service to families, and does not reflect the endorsement of the Sikeston Regional Center or the Missouri Department of Mental Health. Families should always consult with their doctors and therapists before trying any new product or treatment.**

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